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# LETTER DATED 1 JUNE 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ZIMBABWE TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

In my capacity as the Representative of the Current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), I have the honour to transmit herewith a text of an OAU press release issued in Addis Ababa on 29 May 1998, regarding diplomatic efforts deployed by the OAU Secretary-General aimed at defusing the current tension between Ethiopia and Eritrea (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Machivenyika Tobias MAPURANGA
Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe
Representative of the Current Chairman
of the OAU

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ANNEX

Press release issued by the Organization of African Unity in Addis Ababa on 29 May 1998

The Secretary-General of the OAU, Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, paid a one-day working visit to Eritrea yesterday. The visit was undertaken within the framework of the ongoing efforts by African and non-African leaders to defuse tension and seek a peaceful resolution to the current dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Before proceeding to Asmara, the Secretary-General went to Djibouti where he had a meeting with President Hassan Gouled Aptidon, who briefed him on the efforts he has deployed since the inception of the current crisis to help end the tension between the two countries, in his capacity as the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

From Djibouti, the Secretary-General flew to Asmara for a meeting with President Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea. During their long and frank exchange of views, Dr. Salim expressed his serious concern, and that of the continent, over the current tension between Ethiopia and Eritrea and its implications for the peace, security and stability, not only of both countries, but also the Horn of Africa region and the entire African continent. He stressed the fact that the only viable option is for a peaceful resolution of the dispute, especially given the fact that military confrontation cannot and will neither resolve the fundamental dispute that gave rise to the current dispute in the first place, nor serve the long-term interest of the people of the two sisterly countries. He also expressed his support for the ongoing efforts being deployed by President Gouled of Djibouti, Vice-President Kagame of Rwanda and the Government of the United States of America.

On his part, President Isaias Afwerki briefed the Secretary-General on the position of his Government and Eritrea's preparedness to work towards a peaceful resolution of the dispute, if a framework mutually acceptable to the two sides could be established, through the current facilitation efforts by the friends of both countries.

Prior to his visit to Djibouti and Eritrea, the Secretary-General had met with the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Ato Meles Zenawi, on two separate occasions. On all of those occasions, the Prime Minister consistently expressed his Government's disposition to resolve the current crisis peacefully, provided the fundamental and immediate cause of the recent tension is removed.

Even though there remain serious concerns over the situation, the Secretary-General has been encouraged by his meetings with the leaders of both Ethiopia and Eritrea, particularly, their expressed desire and disposition to seek a peaceful resolution of the present dispute between their two countries. The Secretary-General continues to call for vigilance and maximum restraint by the leadership of Ethiopia and Eritrea, given that a military confrontation will not serve the interest of the peoples of both countries, at a time when all

efforts should be directed at the improvement of the well-being of Ethiopians and Eritreans and the economic development of their two countries.

On the basis of the discussions he held with the leaders of the two countries, the Secretary-General is firmly convinced that a peaceful resolution of the dispute is not only desirable, but possible. The OAU will continue to work towards the attainment of that objective.

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